

'Directions 1983': Walk In

BY JOANNE OSTROW

Head east down the Mall and stop at the first round museum on the right: "Directions 1983" shows that today's art is more personal, less political and veering toward installations.

The Hirshhorn's third survey of the state of contemporary art cashes in on pop culture, architecture, quirks on canvas and "real space/illusion."

Three walk-in works — all exploring space, reality and illusion — draw visitors toward the rear of the show and hold them there. Anita Thacher's "Anteroom" plays games with perception to the beat of David Byrne's synthesized music. Color slides create illusions, heightened by manipulated information. A doorknob mounted on the wall-screen seems in synch with the film.

Next door, Kendall Buster's untitled chamber of space-time horrors with phony windows, strings or poles of light, planes and diagrams, puts us in an altered state. Buster's stuck on geometry, metaphors, metaphysics and black and red paint.

Elyn Zimmerman's indoor-outdoor passageways demonstrate a sculptural approach



Detail from an untitled work by Robert Longo.

to architecture. It's the layered look: stone walls, screen grating, drywall and gravel. Light and texture create a tonal experience. You can't get an angle on it, just a lot of angles at once.

Fans of '50s B-movies will be at home in the "Melodrama" section. Alexis Smith's collages parody pulp novels. Superimposed on one mixed-media portrait: "Meet my wife. She held out her hand and I took it gently. A pleasure." And performance artist Robert Longo's violent, vaguely paranoid drawings seem like stills from a film noir.

Julian Schnabel's oil-and-velvet painting, a large-scale clash of anarchistic colors, fits the "expressionisms" grouping; likewise, Jonathan Borofsky's bizarre "Acrylic on Unprimed Canvas with Bubble Wrap and Duct Tape at 2,680,377." Pity this still life, all taped up and no place to go.

"From the Model," art based on architecture, clothing and furniture, includes Siah Armajani's window structures from his "Dictionary for Building" series. His austere forms mostly twist Constructivist, De Stijl and Bauhaus ideas. But like all the works in the exhibition, they indicate future directions by taking cues from the past.

DIRECTIONS 1983 — Forty works by 17 artists at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden through May 15.

Museums

OPENINGS

CORCORAN — "American Master Drawings from the Collection," opens Friday, continuing through April 24. "Time Pieces: The Photographs and Words of Wright Morris," 50 works by the artist and author, opens Tuesday, continuing through May 15. "Counterparts: Form and Emotion in Photographs," 110 master photographs from the Metropolitan Museum, through May 8. "Second Western States Exhibition," the 38th Corcoran Biennial Exhibition of American Painting, 106 paintings by 30 contemporary artists, through April 3. 17th and New York avenues NW. Tues.-Sun., 10-4:30; Thurs. evenings till 9.

PHILLIPS COLLECTION — "Works on Paper: American Prints and Drawings" a small show of infrequently seen works from the permanent collection, opens Tuesday, continuing through June 1. "Master Paintings from the Phillips Collection," 75 masterworks of the 19th and 20th centuries by Bonnard, Cezanne, Daumier, Degas, Van Gogh, El Greco, Klee, Matisse, Picasso, Renoir. "Wilhelm Hammershof: Painter of Stillness and Light," 72 paintings and drawings as part of the "Scandinavia Today" celebration, through March 27. 1600 21st St. NW. Tues.-Sat., 10-5; Sun., 2-7. Tours leave from the front entrance, Wednesday and Saturday at 2.

EXHIBITIONS

AFRICAN ART — "Recent Acquisitions: Benin Court Art, Nigeria," through April 3. "African Emblems of Status," 205 objects explore social value systems, through April 3. Permanent installations: "African Influences in Modern Art," "Frederick Douglass Gallery," selections from the permanent collection. 318 A St. NE. Mon.-Fri., 10-5; Weekends, holidays, 12-5.

AIR AND SPACE — "Hail Columbia!" and "Silent Sky," IMAX film double-feature, on selected weekend evenings through Sunday. "The Artist and the Space Shuttle: Selections from the NASA Art Program," 100 works, 40 artists, through Sept. 6. "The American Black in Aviation," continuing indefinitely. "Probe," new Spacearium presentation, continuing indefinitely. "Aircraft Models," 50 from the collection, continuing. "U.S. Army Helicopter Championship," exhibit honoring U.S. winners in world championships, indefinitely. "25 Years of Space Exploration," artifacts placed in their political and cultural context, through March. "Jacqueline Cochran: World Record Holder," 1930s racing pilot, through August 1983. Shuttle exhibit. Jet Aviation gallery. Early Flight. Viking Lander spacecraft; Lindbergh Commemorative. Spirit of St. Louis; Wright Kitty Hawk; Skylab. Showings of "To Fly," "Living Planet," and "Flyers" daily from 10:15 a.m. Recorded tours available in English. French, German, Spanish and Japanese, with the voices of aerospace pioneers. Sixth Street and Independence Avenue SW. Daily, 10-5:30.

AMERICAN ART — "Speaking A New Classicism: American Architecture Now," 87 drawings, 22 photos, 9 models and 3 mock-ups, through March 27. "Elizabeth Nourse (1859-1938): A Salon Career," 100 portraits, landscapes, drawings by the expatriate, through April 17. "The Prints of Louis Lozowick," 60 lithographs, studies of workers and industrial structures in the '20s and '30s, through April 10. Elihu Vedder's Drawings for the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, continuing. Eighth and G Streets NW. Daily, 10-5:30.

AMERICAN HISTORY — "Atomic Clocks," 80 pieces of hardware, 100 photographs and drawings. "Woody Woodpecker," models, storyboards and illustrations documenting the cartoon character. "The Italians and the Creation of America," rare books and maps, 79 objects from the 15th through 19th centuries, continuing through March. "Platinum Women," 52 fashionable women shown in early 1900s platinumypes by photographers Eickemeyer, Kasebier and White. 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. Daily, 10-5:30.

FREER — "Japanese Ceramics from Past to Present," 50 examples dating from the middle Jomon period to the late 19th century, through August. "To Dream of Fair Women," paintings by Whistler, Thayer and Dewing, continuing. "Japanese and Chinese Lacquer," "Nastaliq Calligraphy," Jefferson Drive at 12th Street SW. Daily, 10-5:30.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS — "Artists for Victory," prints showing artists' feelings about World War II, through June on the Madison Building's first floor. "The Balloon and Man's Will to Fly," on the 200th anniversary of the ascent of the Montgolfier

The Essence Of the Wild

BY HANK BURCHARD

For six weeks only, the Museum of Natural History is treating visitors to a feast of works by one of the few American wildlife artists who really *knew* what he was seeing.

Francis Lee Jaques (1887-1969) lived long, traveled far and looked carefully at the wild world, and seized it for us in a melange of contrasting styles and media. He was a plain man, a plainsman who farmed and worked as a woodcutter, railroad fireman and taxidermist before a drawing he mailed away won him a job at the American Museum of Natural History.

Jaques was crazy about drawing from early childhood, and taught himself to paint in oils or watercolor as it suited him and his subject. Scratchboard, to which Jaques came late, was the medium he mastered; it gave nearly total freedom to his lifelong tendency to skip the details and strike straight to the essence of an animal and the land it lives on.

Jaques scorned the "feather painters" who seize on each separate feature, but fail to capture the whole creature. These superb mechanics dominate our wildlife painting; their Super Bowl is the annual competition for the federal migratory waterfowl stamp, and the winner almost automatically becomes a millionaire. But art it ain't.

An artist Jaques was, although he seemed to think of himself as an illustrator, and admired N.C. Wyeth and his gifted contemporaries and followers who flourished until high-speed film, telephoto lenses and cheap printing plates put them out of business.

Although Jaques also made much of his living illustrating books — including many by his best friend, and wife, Florence Page Jaques — his major works were of the first rank. One can return to them again and again without growing jaded, and some could hang without apology beside the best of Winslow Homer, Frederick Remington and John James Audubon.



Canvasback ducks were among Francis Lee Jaques' subjects, to be shown at the Museum of Natural History.

nied by a catalogue that seems overpriced at \$12.95. Much of the text consists of fragments of the autobiography Jaques labored over inconclusively during his later years. While the interspersed explanatory material is generally helpful, it's often irritating. Unnecessary insertions break the flow of a style that, while unpolished, is original and superior to that of the authors/editors. For instance, referring to his taxidermy period, Jaques writes,

especially evenings. I could hear footsteps creaking down the icy sidewalks.

The cataloguers then blur that image by piling on, "He hoped that they would pause at his shop, and some did. But usually the footsteps receded, and he would remain alone."

But no one stands between us and the works in this retrospective.

FRANCIS LEE JACQUES: ARTIST-NATURALIST — This Saturday through April 24 on the rotunda balcony of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

Those years were wondrous ones for me,

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